

e (a) feeding the indefinite length suture to a drawing axis of an apparatus for drawing and cutting thereof, said drawing axis being defined as being parallel to first and second longitudinal members of a drawing frame; ^{of said apparatus}

(b) heating a predetermined small length of the suture to stiffen the small length of suture after subsequent cooling thereof, in preparation for cutting the suture at the stiffened small length and inserting a stiffened lead cut end of the suture into an end of a needle for swaging thereto;

② (c) gripping said indefinite length suture and alternately drawing it along said drawing axis by first and second gripping means, said first and second gripping means being mounted for reciprocal movement on at least one of said first and second longitudinal members, wherein one of said first and second gripping means draws the indefinite length suture to a position beyond said cutting means, while the other of said first and second gripping means reciprocates to a start position along said drawing axis before said cutting means, such that the first and second gripping means are used alternately to draw said indefinite length suture through the apparatus and to feed said indefinite length suture into a needle;

(d) cutting said indefinite length suture to provide uniform lengths of suture;

(e) providing a predetermined long length of suture travel between the heating step and the cutting step, which is a discrete number, two or more, times the uniform length of suture being cut by the apparatus, to provide a discrete number, two or more, of apparatus cutting cycles between heating of the suture and cutting of the suture,

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whereby after heating of a small length of suture, the suture is cooled to allow setting and hardening of the suture material prior to cutting.

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³ 23. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim ² 22, including guiding the suture to the heating step by at least one small diameter idler roller, and after heating thereat, drawing the suture around a large diameter idler roller, large relative to the diameter of the small diameter idler roller, which is provided because the small length of suture which has been heated has begun to harden and set by the time the heated suture reaches the large diameter idler roller, and the large diameter thereof facilitates the suture to travel therearound and change direction without picking up a permanent curve set from the large idler roller, to provide a straight suture, without any curve, when it is subsequently cut and inserted into a needle.

⁴ 24. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim ³ 23, including heating the suture near the top of the apparatus, and positioning the large diameter idler roller near the bottom of the apparatus, such that the suture reverses direction at the large diameter roller and is drawn vertically upwardly to the first and second gripping means.

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^u 26. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim ¹ 21, including guiding the suture to the heating step by at least one small diameter idler roller, and after heating thereat, drawing the suture around a large diameter idler roller, large relative to the diameter of the small diameter idler roller, which is provided because the small length of suture which has been heated has begun to harden and set by the time the heated suture reaches the large diameter idler roller, and the large diameter thereof facilitates the suture to travel therearound and change direction without picking up a permanent curve set from

the large idler roller, to provide a straight suture, without any curve, when it is subsequently cut and inserted into a needle.

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⁷27. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim ⁶26, including heating the suture near the top of the apparatus, and positioning the large diameter idler roller near the bottom of the apparatus, such that the suture reverses direction at the large diameter roller and is drawn vertically upwardly to the first and second gripping means.

¹¹31. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim ¹⁰30, wherein for each different position of the cutting step, the heating is performed at a different predetermined position to precisely position the stiffened small length of suture at a cutter means after said discrete number of apparatus cycles for cutting said indefinite length suture.

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¹²32. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim ¹¹31, including positioning the suture for heating by positioning a pointer adjacent to a specified reading on a linear measurement scale stationarily positioned in the apparatus.

¹³33. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim ¹²32, including positioning the suture for heating in the apparatus by rotating a handcrank and precision leadscrew.

¹⁴34. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim ¹⁰30, including positioning the suture for heating by positioning a pointer adjacent to a specified reading in a linear measurement scale stationarily positioned in the apparatus.

¹⁵35. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim ¹⁰30, including positioning the suture for heating in the apparatus by rotating a handcrank and precision leadscrew.